

...ability I got in a different world "Return by Death"
...in and again to save her.



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Re:ゼロ

Re: Life in a different world from zero

から始める異世界生活



Re:Zero Kara Hajimeru Isekai Seikatsu (WN)

Arc 3 Interlude II-III

by Nagatsuki Tappei

Info: [Novel Updates](#)

*****NOTE FROM TRANSLATION CHICKEN*****

“INTERLUDE II” IS THE SECOND-TO-LAST CHAPTER OF ARC 3, AND SHOULD NARRATIVELY BE RIGHT AFTER THE ENDING OF EPISODE 25 OF THE ANIME.

IF YOU HAVEN’T WATCHED EPISODE 25 OF THE ANIME YET(NO ONE HAS), IT MIGHT BE A GOOD IDEA TO BOOKMARK THIS FOR NOW AND READ AFTERWARDS.

A LOT OF PEOPLE ASKED ABOUT INTERLUDE I. AFTER RE-READING AGAIN, I THINK THE STORY FLOWS FAR MORE BEAUTIFULLY IF YOU CONTINUE FROM EPISODE 25 DIRECTLY TO INTERLUDE II. INTERLUDE I ONLY SETS UP AND ENDS AT A CLIFFHANGER, AND HAVE LITTLE CONTENT OF ITS OWN. EVERYTHING FROM INTERLUDE I WILL BE ADDRESSED IN INTERLUDE III, SO YOU WON’T MISS ANYTHING.

I’LL TRY MY BEST TO TRANSLATE THE WEB NOVEL TO CONTINUE THE STORY FROM WHERE THE 1ST SEASON LEAVES OFF. THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE WN AND THE ANIME ARE NEGLIGIBLE IN MY OPINION, SO COMING HERE STRAIGHT FROM THE ANIME SHOULDN’T BE A PROBLEM.

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Interlude II [Let's Eat]

In the swaying dragon carriage, Rem was only thinking of him.

His name suddenly appearing in her mind, Rem softly lifted her face, and narrowed her eyes against the bright radiance of the sun.

She gazed at the entourage of dragon carriages ahead, inside them are the wounded soldiers of the battle with the White Whale.

All in all, only their urgent wounds had been treated, and more than a few of them are still seriously injured. Yet even in their pain, the corners of their lips shone only the sense of accomplishment for having fulfilled a long-cherished dream. After carrying this dream for so many years, to see it finally realized meant more to them than injury or death. Having achieved what they set out to do, they now ride toward the Capital, to their triumphant return.

Taking all this into her sight, Rem hated herself for not being able to hold back the pain inside her heart.

[Crusch: You look anxious, Rem. Are you still worrying about him?]

[Rem: ...Crusch-sama]

Glancing toward the voice, it is Crusch sitting beside Rem.

Wrapped in light bandages, it is commendable how Rem revealed no sign of the seriousness her injuries, but it was impossible to conceal her depleted stamina. The fact they rode in a carriage was also because Crusch didn't feel comfortable letting Rem ride a ground dragon alone in this condition. So she resolved to accompany her, at least until the Capital is within their sights.

Sensing Rem's unsettled look, Crush casually shrugged.

[Crusch: Compared to this...] shaking her head,

[Crusch: He has Wilhelm, Ferris, the elites of the expedition, and Ricardo's mercenary company, all there to assist him. Besides, Anastasia must have predicted this turn of events. Even if the adversary's strength is a concern, I don't think there is any reason they would lose]

[Rem: Even so, I can't help but selfishly worry]

[Crusch: Still can't remove the source of anxiety huh... When the obstacle is within you, it would be possible to improve yourself until it is overcome. But when it's about other people, it does become quite difficult... Ah, so I am quite terrible at comforting people after all, my apologies]

Seeing Rem sink deeper into her anxiety, Crusch realized she had misspoken and lowered her eyes. But seeing the cold and formal Crusch suddenly out-of-character, the corner of Rem's lips couldn't help but curl into a smile.

[Crusch: En, that's good] seeing this, Crusch nodded contently,

[Crusch: Natsuki Subaru said it before, "a smile suits Rem better, doesn't it?"

Even though it sounded like it came out of nowhere, it wasn't an entirely stupid thing to say]

[Rem: Crusch-sama... you know when you smile you give off a completely different impression. You are usually stern, yet once you smile you become...]

[Crusch: People do say that, I can't say I'm not angry about it. Because I don't smile for no reason in front of people, I guess I am becoming rather unlovable...]

Rem wasn't sure whether to take that as a joke, but seeing Crusch's gentle smile, her lips opened into a smile as well. Courageous and proud, to Rem, who has always been lacking confidence, Crusch was an ideal woman. But of course, in Rem's heart, the highest honor was reserved for none other than her older sister, Ram.

[Crusch: Ahead of their path is the Witch Cult... Even though it was more or less expected considering Emilia's identity, until we know more about them, caution is necessary. Natsuki Subaru realizes this, but surely Lord Mathers has a plan as well?]

[Rem: The depth of my master's mind, Rem couldn't possibly know. Even if you ask me I wouldn't be able to say]

[Crusch: That's harsh. Now that we're allies after all, a little information slipping around wouldn't be too bad]

Perhaps it was to distract Rem from sinking into negative thoughts again,

indeed it was thanks to Crusch that Rem wasn't left alone to sink into her worries.

Besides, Crusch made a good point, a man such as Roswaal L. Mathers must have had a grand plan for all this. Surely Subaru's actions were all furthering his master's goals, while at the same time he's recovering his lost reputation.

Actually... with the slaying of the White Whale, his reputation has already far surpassed what it was before.

—“Hero Natsuki Subaru”

To Rem, whose heart and future he had saved, this assessment is nothing short of accurate. Considering the bright future he has yet to create, this is also more than justified.

And then, to be at the side of that radiant hero, a place he could occasionally turn to to make sure she was there, if only that place could hold her existence—then there is nothing else in the world Rem would wish for. With this alone, she would be content.

When Subaru appears in her mind, Rem's heart is always full of turmoil.

It becomes warm, and perhaps calm. Yet somehow it also becomes full of pain, of anxiety, of longing and worry.

To give her heart at once so much happiness and so much suffering, only Subaru could do this to her.

With a smile carved upon her lips, Rem's thoughts turned to her future: her and Subaru's future.

Stealing a glance at the side of Rem's face, Crusch exhaled a sigh of relief. Caressing the scabbard of her knight-sword with her fingers, her eyes stared in silence into the road ahead, her thoughts were of the long path to the Capital.

[Crusch: — —-]

[Rem: — — —-?]

Crusch squinted her eyelids, the same instant Rem heard a noise and raised her head.

What Crusch's eyes captured was something off about the dragon carriage up ahead. The noise Rem heard came from the same direction. In fact, both clues were leading to the same conclusion.

In Crusch's eyes, the dragon carriage "disintegrated". In Rem's ears, the prelude to "collapse" echoed like the sound of raindrops.

A mist of blood sprayed out. The image of the dragon carriage in front of them all of a sudden transformed into a pitiful blur.

The ground dragon, the carriage, and all of the wounded inside were completely uprooted, and then shattered mercilessly by overwhelming devastation.

[Crusch: –! Enemy attack!]

Her astonished throat delayed only an instant, before Crusch bellowed out the rally call. With Crusch at the helm, the surrounding dragon carriages sensed the crisis and readied for battle.

Rem, pushing away all sensation of injury and exhaustion, with her morningstar in hand, stood up at once — on the other side of the blood mist was the upright shadow of a man.

Who is that man, now burning into her sight, standing in the middle of the road?

Without weapon, without armor, without fear. Without compassion or malice or intent—!

[Crusch: –Crush over him!!]

Crusch's command came roaring from upon the driver's platform. Hearing the command, the knight-driver stretched the reins in acknowledgement. With a cry, the ground dragon lead the carriage charging — with momentum capable of shredding any large animal coming into contact.

Without deviation from the mark, it was a head-on collision into the upright figure. The man showed no intention of moving. And just like that, the two objects touched, a slender body about to be ripped to shreds by the—

[Rem: Crusch-sama!]

With this cry, Rem picked up Crusch by the waist and flew off the side of the carriage. There was no time to reach for the driver, Rem landed biting her lip, thinking this.

And then, right after,

[Man: Ah really? I want to give up! I didn't even do anything and someone wants to crush me to death. Really, that isn't what people should be doing. I don't think so]

He spoke with the relaxed demeanor of a man leisurely walking in a park, or basking in the sun or some such situation.

If it weren't for the shattered debris of what used to be the dragon carriage, Rem would not have found this scene to be so bizarrely horrifying.

No matter how you look at it, the man doesn't seem anything out of the ordinary.

His body was long and slender, and his neat white hair was neither long nor short, nor particularly odd. His black clothes were neither flamboyant nor shabby, and his face was not eye-catching at all. He looked so very ordinary, that perhaps no matter where you put him he would not seem out of place, that if

you met him on the street you'd forget him within 10 seconds.

But the fact is, upon coming into contact with this man, the ground dragon was ripped in two, its feet still in mid-stride, and then, along with the driver and carriage, shattered into countless indiscernible pieces.

The most frightening part is, though Rem never looked away, all she saw was this man merely “standing there”.

Not doing anything, just by standing there the man survived collision with a charging dragon carriage, and still stands there as if it were nothing.

[Crusch: Thank you Rem, for saving me. But... it seems the situation hasn't improved]

Still being carried in Rem's arms, Crusch thanked her, stood back up, and in the same instant drew her knight-sword from its sheath. For the knight-driver who followed her order and as a result was shattered into a thousand pieces, Crusch felt the pain in her heart and narrowed her eyelids.

[Crusch: To so cruelly murder my subject, do not think this will end so easily... Who are you?]

With her naked blade gleaming with the intent to kill, she threw these words at the man. Taking in these words, the man touched his chin and began nodding as if he understood.

[Man: Ah I see I see right right, you don't know about me. But I know about you. The whole Capital... actually, the whole country... you are quite the topic of

conversation right now. You are a candidate for the next King after all. Even I, so out of touch with the world, can imagine what a great burden...]

[Crusch: Idle talk ends now. Answer my question, or the next time I shall slay you]

[Man: That's really extreme! But then you wouldn't be able to run a country otherwise. Yet this sentiment, I really don't understand it one bit... This desire to wear the crown, and take up all the responsibilities, how can anyone understand it? Ah, ah, even though I don't understand, I won't disagree with you. I'm not so arrogant as that, not one bit. Unlike you...]

Not paying any attention to Crusch, the man just kept on and on.

And then,

[Crusch: –As I said, that was the last chance]

As Crusch coldly pronounced these words, her arm swung out a blade-of-wind.

Crusch's wind-magic combined with swordsmanship, unleashes an invisible slash. Renowned as the "Hundred-Men-Cut", it is a powerful ultra-long-range slash that can sever a man's body without him even knowing where it came from, or who.

Back then, when the Mabeast "Great Rabbit" appeared in the plains of the Karsten county, she slew all the Mabeasts under the Great Rabbit's command in her first ever battle, and it was that time onward Count Crusch Karsten earned the name "Hundred-Men-Cut".

Even the White Whale's adamant skin was opened by this blade, it had played no small part in bringing down that colossal Mabeast. Compared to the White Whale, this small, frail body could not possibly withstand...

Yet,

[Man: ...attacking someone while they're still talking, just where are your manners?]

Head tilted, as if flaunting how his body took no damage, the man just stood there.

His existence was utterly unaffected by a slash that could rend even the White Whale's armor. The man's body — no, even his clothes were unscathed.

He did not defend the attack, rather, it was something wholly different and unknown.

Crusch could not help but hold her breath and Rem froze in place, after witnessing something so far outside the realm of understanding. In front of them, the man sighed for the first time.

[Man: You know...] with a tone lowered by displeasure,

[Man: I was talking. Wasn't I was talking just now? And then you interrupted me. Isn't that a bit impolite? Don't you think that was wrong? I have a right to speak... even though I don't really want to have to point this out, but to not

interrupt people when they're speaking... isn't that common social decency? You're free to listen or not listen I won't bother you about that, but just what are you trying to do by not letting me talk?]

As he ranted, the man occasionally stomped the ground with a displeased expression on his face. And like this, he pointed his finger at those two in front of him, both now eerily speechless.

[Man: And now you're quiet, what is this? You're listening. You were listening, right? Wasn't I asking you something? Then give me some kind of reply, it should be like that, right? You won't even do that, don't even want to. Ah, ah, freedom. That's your freedom. You see me ranting and you want to kill me, then when I ask you a question, you ignore me like I'm the wind. So it's like that, is it? Well you're free to do that. Alright, lets just say it's like that. But then, what is that supposed to mean?]

Seeing the two standing silently in front of him bracing for an attack, he tilted his head and stared at them with his sharp eyes, and then with a smothered voice,

[Man: You're disregarding my Right—one of my only few possessions, right?]

Just as a chill ran up Rem's back, the man took a step forward. His drooping arm lifted, creating a small gust of wind.

Then, on the same line as the motion of his arm — the earth, the air, and the world parted in two.

Round and round and round, Crusch's severed left shoulder flew into the air.

Still grasping onto the sheath of a knight-sword, the arm dropped down in a spray of blood. Crusch, blown off her feet by the impact, fell to the ground, convulsing in pain and mass loss of blood.

[Rem: Crusch-sama—]

Stunned for few seconds, Rem rushed to the side of the fallen Crusch. She placed her hands on Crusch's wound and with the small final remnant of her Mana, applied all her power to stop the bleeding.

Crusch's shoulder flowed bright crimson, the flesh, bones, nerves and arteries were all perfectly severed. A clean and masterful attack, Rem sighed with a rather inappropriate admiration.

[Crusch: Ferris... oh... you?]

Under Rem's healing arms, Crusch looked on with unfocused eyes, muttering indiscernibly, and, with her remaining right arm, grasped tightly onto Rem's knee. Proof that she still possessed the strength to live.

Crusch clenched her teeth, enduring her pain.

Rem kept her eyes on the man's every movement.

She has no means of defending against his strikes. At the first sign of an attack, to leap away with Crusch is the only thing she could do.

In a moment of eerie realization— for some reason Crusch and Rem are all alone — why hasn't anyone come to their aid? In this critical juncture, with their lord gravely wounded, those knights who did not cower even in the face of the White Whale, why—

[Youth: Ah really... I eat and I eat it's still not enough! It's because of that, we keep on living! Eating, chewing, biting, ripping, crunching, munching, sucking! GLUTTONOUS DRINKING! GLUTTONOUS EATING! AH— I'M DONE!]

All of a sudden from behind came the shrill, ear-splitting voice of a teenager.

Like the first man, the youth's voice sent chills running up Rem's spine. Her body stiff, she turned to look at him. The youth stood among several empty carriages, from head to toe he was covered in blood.

His long, dark-brown hair extending all the way down to his knees, his body was short, about the same height as Rem, and perhaps 2 or 3 years younger — perhaps not much older than the kids in the village near the mansion.

Under his hair, only a thin, blood-soaked rag covers his slender body. Every inch of his skin is coated with blood.

Of course none of the blood was his. It was from the knights lying at his feet.

While Crusch and Rem were in a standoff with the man in front, the knights had engaged the enemy behind them. In the end, before Rem even sensed any combat, it was already over.

[Rem: You, are...]

Her voice quivering, Rem, with Crusch in her arms, backed up until both enemies were within her field of vision. Blood from Crusch's shoulder had dyed the road red. Now the air turned cold, as if mocking their weakness, their fear.

Hearing the question, the man and the youth looked at each other.

As if it had all been arranged, they nodded to each other. Then with the same deranged smile of violent delight, they announced their name:

[Man: Witch Cult Sin Archbishop "Greed", Regulus Corneus!]

[Youth: Witch Cult Sin Archbishop "Gluttony", LEY BATENKAITOS!]

✂ ✂ ✂ ✂ ✂ ✂ ✂ ✂ ✂ ✂ ✂ ✂ ✂

[Ley: When we sensed our pet got killed we came to have a look. But then, AH! — WHAT A DELIGHTFUL HARVEST! It's good, it's pretty good, it's very good, it's great, it's wonderful, it's terrific, it's breathtaking, it's remarkable! It's SPECTACULAR! Passion! Love! Hate! Chivalry! Oh JOY! And SORROW! That is, that is! THAT IS WORTH EATING!]

Witch Cult — and Sin Archbishop.

When those words reached Rem's ears, she stood frozen in place.

With an exhilarated expression the youth stomped on the ground while howling in strange noises.

Spinning, as if dancing, his arms pointed to the fallen knights, and then looked at them as if with overwhelming compassion.

[Ley: How WONDERFUL! To personally come to feed. It's been really hard to find people with backbone nowadays. But now, I am rediscovering my hunger's LONG LOST GRATIFICATION!]

[Regulus: That's what I don't understand about you, Batenkaitos, your hunger isn't real hunger, and the one being filled isn't even you. Why can't you be satisfied with just the way you are? We only truly possess what we hold in our own two hands and can carry with our own two arms. If you realize that, you will be able to control your desires, no?]

[Ley: No need to get preachy old man, I don't like being preached to. I don't disagree with what you said, but I'm not interested either. To be honest, as long as I don't starve – I DON'T REALLY CARE ABOUT THE REST!]

“Gluttony” Batenkaitos descended into a fit of deranged laughter, and “Greed” Regulus shrugged disinterestedly.

Two Sin Archbishops appearing in the same place at the same time, Rem sank into thought.

In terms of strength, defeating these two is impossible.

Even though Crusch's bleeding had been stopped, she is still in critical condition. Whether the knights are dead or comatose, they can no longer fight.

To heal Crusch, Rem had already over-tapped her mana, though if she transform into demon mode she will be able to absorb mana from the atmosphere and put up a fight. But against these two, victory is inconceivable.

On the one hand is the flawless offense and defense of “Greed”. Known to be able to capture a city single handedly, it is impossible to measure the full extent of his power. On the other hand, “Gluttony” is no less formidable. Though his abilities are as yet unknown, he has managed to wipe out an entire battle tested army within seconds. No matter what, Rem could not see victory waiting for her in the near future.

She quickly scanned the battlefield, the Riger carriages are nowhere to be seen. The demihuman mercenaries were tasked with transporting wounded soldiers — and the head of the White Whale. They might have escaped in the chaos and be retreating full speed toward the Capital right now. Commanding them must be the Fang of Iron Vice Captain – Hetaro – bright and resourceful, and possessing great common sense and judgement...

If given enough time, perhaps he will return with reinforcements.

But, even so — it will probably not arrive in time for Rem.

[Rem: White Whale...]

[Regulus: Eh?]

[Ley: Huh?]

She muttered quietly, and both Sin Archbishops tilted their head.

She held her breath for an instant, having found a clue to stall for time. Before they lost interest, she continued.

[Rem: Did you want the Whale back? Because we are transporting the severed head to the Capital right now]

[Ley: Head? Ah, I was beginning to wonder what that weird smell was. What happens to the head doesn't matter anyway. It's dead, sure bring it back, what can you do? If we want to, we could always make a new one... It'll take about the same amount of time to raise]

Saying this, Batenkaitos snapped his neck and ground his teeth,

[Ley: Compared to this...] he said forcefully

[Ley: Compared to a dead Whale we are more interested in the PEOPLE THAT KILLED IT. After 400 years someone FINALLY killed that thing. Even though we were already expecting a feast... AH! THIS IS FAR BEYOND OUR EXPECTATIONS!]

His head shaking up and down, his long hair wildly swinging, the youth laughed with saliva flying from his mouth, clacking his teeth as he did so.

[Ley: "Love! Chivalry! Hatred! Obsession! Accomplishment! Gathered together brought to a boil and swallowed whole! THE GRATIFICATION! Is there anything in the world more DELICIOUS? No no no no no no no no no there isn't there isn't THERE ISN'T! GLUTTONOUS DRINKING! GLUTTONOUS EATING! So! My Heart! My Stomach! My JOY and GRATIFICATION are TREEEEEEEMBLING!!]

Incomprehensible.

As if losing control, Batenkaitos broke into shrill, convulsive laughter. Silently, Rem turned her eyes to Regulus, and Regulus waved hello.

[Regulus: Unfortunately, unlike him... I'm here purely, purely by accident... Not my intention at all... Of course, do I have hunger and desires like his? To hold such selfish, meaningless desires... Unlike his unsatisfied stomach torturing him, I, on the other hand, am completely, utterly, content with myself!]

Spreading his arms wide like a cross, Regulus stood in front of Rem with an utterly refreshing expression.

Crusch's left arm was severed, yet his two arms are still free to bend and turn, it was like an act to flaunt his very existence.

[Regulus: Conflict, I hate that... For me, just merely enjoying the calm and safety of regular life is enough, I have no more need than that. Static, unchanging time and my self, that's the best. Because my hands are small and powerless, for me, just for myself, just to protect my meager possessions I have to use up all my strength. That's my kind of fragile existence]

Regulus emphasized it by clenching his hand into a fist. The hand that claimed countless lives, and the arm of a woman. Such an explanation is just taking it too far.

Be it Ley, a madman in a trance of deranged laughter, or Regulus, a self-righteous, self-satisfied and self-indulged blabbermouth, they certainly are Witch Cultists.

A storm of boiling rage was rising in her heart.

Rem laid Crush, still faintly breathing, down on the grassy plain. She forced her quivering legs to stand. In her hand, she held her morning star, and squeezing out the final drop of her depleted mana, spears of ice formed in the air around her.

Seeing this, Ley and Regulus's expressions changed.

[Regulus: Was anybody listening? I said I don't want to fight? If you're going take an attitude like that, then, then that's ignoring my wishes... That's violating my Right. One of the few meager possessions I was permitted to have... My property. Taken from me. — To me, already so few in my desires, this is... unforgivable!]

[Rem: Enough is enough, Witch Cultist.]

Raising her head toward Regulus, Rem pronounced these words firm and resolute. Toward the disappointed-looking Regulus, Rem rattled her iron chains.

[Rem: Sooner or later, a hero will appear. How much pain and suffering your self-indulgence and conceit had caused in the world, will be known to that hero. Rem's deeply beloved, one and only, hero.]

[Ley: Hey, a hero. We'll be looking forward to that guy! If you believe in him so much, that guy must be DELICIOUS!]

Clapping his hands, body angled forward, Ley Batenkaitos stuck his tongue out at Rem. His eyes were not the eyes of a man looking at an enemy, much less at a woman. They were the eyes of a starving beast looking at his food.

The fallen knights behind Batenkaitos began to blur, and become indistinguishable.

Their existence, their position, none of it is now comprehensible to Rem. Why are they lying there, who are they, and what relation do they have to herself?

Just like the nightmare of one's existence being erased by the White Whale's mist. So the Whale's master, "Gluttony", possessed the same Authority.

—"Head Maid of the Household of Margrave Roswaal L. Mathers, Rem"

Intending to proclaiming her identity, Rem shook her head.

In this moment, the name she really wanted to say was

[Rem: I am only someone who is beloved by the person she loves. Companion of the Hero, the one I love the most in all the world, no matter what. Natsuki Subaru's companion, Rem]

A pristine white horn emerged from her forehead, an immense surge of mana flew into her body from the atmosphere.

Her body drinking in new strength, the chain of her morning star writhing, rattling, the ice spears around her ringing in anticipation.

She opened her eyes, taking in the world and the feeling of the atmosphere. In her mind, she was seeing his face.

[Rem: Prepare yourselves, Sin Archbishops. Rem's hero shall bring punishment upon you!]

Raising her morning star, the same instant the ice spears flew, Rem's body shot forth.

As if in reply, Batenkaitos' mouth stretched wide open, full of fangs.

[Ley: How wonderful!! —Ah such PASSION! LET'S EAT!!]

Clash met clash, and in that instant she thought—

I wish when he realizes I am gone, it could cause a small ripple in his heart.

—This alone, was what Rem wished for in her final moment.

Interlude III [To Each, Their Oaths]

—Lying on the bed, her expression was serene. To Subaru she looked like she was sleeping.

Her lashes are so long... he thought in a daze, gazing at her closed eyes. She'd usually make an effort to keep her face expressionless, but in her sleep, a softness befitting her age was showing on her cheeks. Come to think of it, Subaru had never seen her asleep.

She always woke before him, and slept after he did. Subaru knew, to keep herself resolute, she had always tried to bury the childish side of her, but that stubborn facade had collapsed so many times before Subaru's eyes.

Be it surprised, or embarrassed, pouting or about to cry, or after opening their hearts her smile gleaming under her tears, there should be so many, so many chances to see them again—

[—Rem]

Even calling her name, caressing her soft, white cheeks, she made no response.

On the bed, deep in her slumber, the maid's dress so familiar on her shoulders, the white headband that adorned her hair so blue and beautiful as the sky, were all gone.

The attire she wore in her work, and in battle — she had no need for them now.

[There you are]

In the room silent and stagnant as though time had stopped, someone called to Subaru.

Slowly turning, as though reluctantly, he looked behind him. It was a young woman with long, softly swaying hair. She wore a simple yet elegant dark blue evening dress, and even as she walked toward him, she seemed overflowing with grace.

But all her movements had a slightly muddled hesitation about them, which combined with the elegance of her person gave out a rather odd impression. Subaru cannot help but feel a sense of awkwardness when he is near her.

[Long Haired Girl: She...]

[Subaru: Still hasn't changed. Even though I can't do anything... I thought I could at least stay here with her. But that's such a cowardly thing to say]

[Long Haired Girl: Still, this... would make her happy, wouldn't it?]

Seeing Subaru's downcast expression, the woman timidly tried to console him. But hearing this, Subaru shot back a stare at once fierce, bitter, and cruel. His senses sharpened at her words, his eyes locked onto hers. Without meaning to, it was already far beyond his control. Noticing his reaction, the young woman placed her hands over her lips, [I'm sorry], she apologized.

[Long Haired Girl: I said something I shouldn't have, and hurt you, didn't I?]

[Subaru: No... no, I am the one who should apologize. I was only venting my anger all pent up inside... If I behave like this, Rem will be really, really angry with me, won't she? "You shouldn't be hurting people's feelings like that, Subaru-kun", or something like that]

He shrugged, and said that softly in Rem's voice.

In his mind, he heard her voice saying those words. A voice only he could hear.

His impression sounded nothing like her, but there is not a person left in the world who could point that out.

Against Subaru's empty words and gestures, the woman sadly lowered her eyes, and held her left wrist with her right hand.

As if a shadow had descended between them, the room returned to silence.

...This familiar feeling... Natsuki Subaru shouldn't stay like this, should he? Subaru shook his head in his heart.

To sink into the depths of an ocean of despair, is easy, even if only so the piercing anguish would go away. But it doesn't suit him – as the man she believes in, as the man Rem loves above all the world, this is not what Natsuki Subaru should do.

Never.

[Subaru: ...You were looking for me, then?]

[Long Haired Girl: Yes, I want to hold a meeting with everyone present, so I've asked everyone to gather in the lounge, if it's alright with...]

Nodding with an expression like she's just been saved, the woman got right to the point. But then she stopped half way through, and furrowed her brows rather awkwardly. It took a while before Subaru noticed this.

[Subaru: My name is Natsuki Subaru]

[Long Haired Girl: ...I'm sorry, Natsuki Subaru-sama. I will be sure to remember. Even though I've been told how much I am indebted to you... Please excuse me, my apologies!]

[Subaru: It can't be helped, can it? There must a lot of things you need to remember right now, don't worry about it.]

As if to say she was very, very sorry, the young woman lowered her head.

Then, seeing her recover again with perfect grace, even femininity, Subaru cannot help but feel a sense of surreal incongruity stabbing at his chest. But even Subaru wasn't brash enough to say this out loud.

Shaking his head, Subaru decided to put that aside for now, and stood up.

Turning to the girl on the bed, he gently touched the hair on her forehead.

[Subaru: I'll be back, Rem]

Breathing softly, she really exists.

—Having been forgotten by all the world, this was her only remaining existence.

With Rem behind his back, Subaru turned to face the young woman.

[Subaru: The lounge is it? Let's not make them wait, let's go]

[Long Haired Girl: Yes, let's go, Natsuki Subaru-sama]

Her head slightly inclining forward, softly smiling, she seemed at that moment like something out of a dream – her long, green hair, flowing with her every movement.

Hating having to admit this, Subaru turned away, hiding a genuine smile emerging on his face.

[Subaru: Thank you for coming to fetch me, Miss Crusch]

With this name, Subaru thanked the long haired girl – who seem to have become a different person entirely.



—By the time Subaru arrived in the Capital, it was already over.

His conversation with Emilia on the road were all gone from his mind.

The girl sitting safely next to him, Subaru should feel content, and relieved, having finally, finally saved her. But in the relentlessly galloping dragon carriage, the only thing on Subaru's mind was the other girl.

[Who is... Rem?]

Looking confused, she tilted her head as she said this.

He scrambled to look for the smallest hint of a joke, something in her voice, in her expression, hoping against hope the words “Just kidding~” would come out of her mouth...

Whether it's Petra, or the other kids, no one remembered her.

Having confirmed this fact with everyone on the carriage, Subaru commanded the driver to rush to the Capital with all haste, on his face was the desperate expression of someone riding into death itself.

Impossible. There must be a mistake.

It was all going so well. Everyone was saved, the objective was completed. Despite enduring so much pain and sorrow, taking so many scars within his heart that will never, ever heal, everything worked out in the end.

And still—

[Aha! It's Subaru-kyun! Impressive, Crusch-sama, you managed to find that capricious little stray!]

On the way to the lounge, seeing the two in the hallway, someone called out to them.

Shaking around in a short dress, liberated from the knight's garments, a pair of catlike ears twitched. Ferris walked over to them and gently picked up Crusch's hands.

[Crusch: Ferris-san...]

[Ferris: I'm just Ferris! Ferris and Crusch-sama have known each other for a very long time nyan. If you still add a -san to my name I'm going to die of loneliness and despair nyan]

Holding up Crusch's hands in one hand, Ferris used the other to nudge Crusch in the shoulder. At such affectionate interaction, Crusch looked like she wasn't sure what to do with herself, but essentially accepted it as it is, and with a [Sorry], she lowered her head.

[Crusch: To become just like before... Even though it's not easy, I will try my best, Ferris... Yes. Just Ferris]

[Ferris: It's alright nyan, because Ferris is always Crusch-sama's companion, and will always stay by your side. And to be together with such a cute version of Crusch-sama, Ferris will find even more reasons to fall for Crusch-sama nyan, just

the thought of that makes Ferris happy nyan!]

Playfully swinging Crusch's captured hands up and down, Ferris blew her a kiss.

Watching them, the unease growing inside Subaru's heart became unbearable.

Even though Crusch had changed so drastically, Ferris treated her the same as always, and accepted her as always, it was something beyond what Subaru could understand.

Inside that smile of Ferris', how much inner struggle must be lying within? Subaru doesn't know, nonetheless, the thought of it alone filled him with sentiment.

[Ferris: Subaru-kyun, get in the lounge nyan. Emilia-sama and old man Wilhelm are waiting for us]

[Subaru: ...A..ah]

His thoughts must have added something into his voice, but Ferris didn't seem to notice. Saying [This way, Crusch-sama], Ferris led her by the hand.

In the subtle atmosphere between Subaru and Ferris, Crusch tried to hide the uncertainty looming between her brows. She looked at them, one and then the other, and in the end not saying a thing, silently followed behind Ferris' steps.

Taking a deep breath, Subaru bit his lips, and closed his eyes.

His mind was on edge. His heart felt desolate. In that state he didn't want to see anyone at all. But it can't be helped. He will not make excuses to comfort himself.

Because the last thing he'd want to do, is to blame her for his pain.

This way, they made their long-overdue entry into the lounge.

Noticing all eyes were on him, Subaru looked around the room. Other than himself, there were four people present, Emilia, Wilhelm, and one step before him, Crusch and Ferris.

Seeing he must be the last one, Subaru closed the door behind him, and ever-so-naturally sat down next to Emilia.

[Emilia: Subaru...]

[Subaru: No-problem. I've calmed down now, Emilia-tan — I, am, alright]

To Emilia's worried call, Subaru lightheartedly retorted. Only his eyes weren't looking at her. Rather, he couldn't see her at all.

If he met Emilia's eyes now, he would have revealed a despised part of himself. The very thought of it filled him with uncontrollable dread.

[Ferris: Now that everyone is here, let's begin!]

With the sound of a clap, everyone’s attention landed on Ferris.

It would be impossible for Crusch to direct a meeting in her condition, so that task fell to Ferris.

Roughly surveying everyone present, Ferris walked to the front of the room with an arm in the air.

[Ferris: Since there are no objections nyan, let’s assess our situation]

Thus, with a smile, a meeting from which everyone wanted something completely different, began.

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—After the battle with the White Whale, on their way back to the Capital, Rem, Crusch, and the punitive expedition, bringing with them wounded soldiers and the Whale’s severed head, were ambushed by two Sin Archbishops.

Half of the expedition perished. The demihuman mercenaries accompanying them retreated immediately, and avoided annihilation.

[Ferris: When the Vice-Captain Hetaro brought the Capital’s knights back to the scene, the Sin Archbishops were already gone nyan. Only our knights’ bodies and...]

[Crusch: People who were like me... right?]

Crusch furrowed her brows at Ferris' last few words, biting her lip. With a dejected expression, she must have felt it was all her fault.

To her, the "Crusch" in Ferris' story might as well be referring to another person.

Because—

[Crusch: My memory was erased... By a Sin Archbishop?]

[Ferris: Probably nyan. I've attended to the other patients with the same condition as Crusch-sama. Their memories are completely gone, there is nothing Ferris' healing magic can do nyan. Even now Ferris has no idea what the cause is...]

[Wilhelm: Sin Archbishop, "Gluttony". This Authority-it must be him]

Wilhelm nodded gravely, and with a stern gaze he looked to Crusch. But, seeing Crusch shrivel under his gaze, Wilhelm closed his eyes in apology.

[Wilhelm: I was inconsiderate of Crusch-sama's condition, and frightened you. I am deeply sorry. I still have much to learn]

[Crusch: No... I should apologize for being such a useless master... Even though I am trying my hardest to remember everything about Wilhelm-sama...]

Hearing Crusch call him "Wilhelm-sama", the old swordsman cringed.

Seeing his sworn master suffering so, the guilt and shame of having failed to protect her brought pain onto Wilhelm's face. Glancing toward Subaru, who at this moment must be carrying the very same feeling in his heart, Wilhelm seemed to understand him.

On the other hand, Ferris, whose attitude toward Crusch would not waver in spite of everything... seemed to disregard Subaru's feeling completely.

[Ferris: Sin Archbishop "Sloth" has been dealt with. And nyan there's "Gluttony" and "Greed". There is a limit to what can be done nyan. Something so rare as two Sin Archbishops moving together, I'd be surprised if Emilia-sama's rise has nothing to do with it]

[Emilia: me?]

Her name suddenly mentioned, Emilia looked at Ferris with a surprised expression. Nodding to her, Ferris continued.

[Ferris: The Witch's Cult will never tolerate the existence of a half-elf such as Emilia-sama. They are usually quiet and creep in the shadows, but now they're all suddenly making such a ruckus, there is obviously a connection here.]

Listening to Ferris' speculations, Subaru crossed his arms, and pondered on a conversation they had before.

The night before the battle with the White Whale, when Subaru discussed with Ferris and Crusch the possibility of a Witch Cultist attack, they had accepted his suspicions readily. That means there must have been precedents...

[Emilia: But um... Even though I don't know much about the Witch Cult... The Witch refers to the "Witch of Envy", right?]

Raising her hand nervously, Emilia uttered this entirely unexpected question.

Subaru doubted his hearing, Wilhelm and Ferris' expressions froze. The only people who weren't astonished by those words were Crusch, and Emilia herself.

Seeing their reactions, Emilia became even more nervous.

[Emilia: Sorry! I can tell from your reactions that that's something I should know, really, really, should]

[Subaru: But... Emilia-tan... you know about the Witch, you were the one who told me...]

The first time they met, she had given him the name "Satella", and then after he had died, he tried to call her by that name again. His memory of her anger... meant that she knew that name was forbidden.

But Emilia shook her head at Subaru's words,

[Emilia: Near the forest where I lived there was a small village... they hated me because of my likeness to the Witch of Envy... So I know how the Witch is regarded in the world, but things like the Witch Cult...]

[Ferris: How Emilia-sama lived in the past let's just put that aside for nyan! But

to say that you don't even know about the Witch Cult at this point is just too outrageous nyan!!]

Shoulders raised, as if mocking, Ferris' hands flung up with a sigh.

Seeing this attitude from Ferris, Subaru's anger rose, and staring into Ferris' eyes he retorted.

[Subaru: How can you say this? To admit you don't know something, do you realize how much courage that takes? To ask what is necessary, what is wrong with that?]

[Ferris: Subaru-kyun is really persuasive nyan! You really are master and servant nyan!]

Ferris relentlessly mocking Subaru's unhidden displeasure, Subaru was about to stand up in anger— But,

[Crusch: Ferris. I cannot overlook what you just said. Apologize at once.]

The moment before Subaru's strength injected into his legs, the words of reproach rang out in the room.

In her dark blue evening dress, up to now frail and timid, she all of a sudden transformed — majestic and fierce, her gaze was that of a Knight.

[Crusch: As Natsuki Subaru-sama said, to ask what you do not know, is nothing deserving of mockery. Even you do not have that right. Understood?]

[Ferris: ...Understood, Crusch-sama]

Her forceful words subsiding, Crusch seemed to return to the soft-spoken girl of a moment before. But as if having heard something from the awe-inspiring Crush of the past, from this now frail and feminine girl, Subaru could not hold in his astonishment. Ferris too, could not contain the shock within his eyes.

[Ferris: Emilia-sama, please accept my apology for my rudeness. Subaru-kyun too]

[Subaru: You... n... no, it's fine. Then, let's talk about the Witch Cult now. Emilia-tan wants to hear it. And to be honest, I don't know the details either...]

Seeing Subaru back down, half giving up, Ferris lightheartedly replied with a [Understood-nyan]. A finger lightly touching the lower lip, Ferris shook around in the short dress.

[Ferris: Firstly, as Emilia-sama said, the Witch Cult is an organization that worships the "Witch of Envy". Ever since the unstoppable rise of the Witch 400 years ago, these fanatics have been active. To the Knights Order, all affiliates of this organization are to be killed-on-sight]

[Emilia: Killed-on-sight... to carry out such extreme orders, how could they?]

[Ferris: The Witch Cultists will not hesitate to burn a village or an entire city just to accomplish their goals. In fact, the village near Lord Roswaal's mansion came close to falling victim to these Cultists, and one of the Sin Archbishops that took part in the ambush had once managed to single handedly capture a city in

the Empire of Volakia in the South]

Emilia kept on blinking her eyes, as if unable to take in these facts. Subaru understands her reaction, because the horrors of the Witch Cult had already been carved deep into his heart.

He now uses Betelgeuse as the standard unit of measurement for insanity.

But in terms of strength, “Greed” sounds like something on a completely different level than Betelgeuse.

[Ferris: Wait wait I’m getting sidetracked nyan... The Witch Cult Sin Archbishops, each named after one of the six Sins, other than Envy, are the executives of the organization]

[Emilia: The six witches... were “Sloth”, “Greed”, “Gluttony”, “Lust”, “Wrath” and “Pride”, right?]

[Ferris: Yes, and especially well known among them are “Sloth” and “Greed”. Greed, as previously mentioned, is known for annihilating entire cities. Sloth, on the other hand, seemed to be behind every little disturbance caused by the Witch Cult. But Sloth has already been beautifully eliminated by our punitive expedition nyan... Right, Subaru-kyun?]

[Subaru: Yes... Sloth is dead. I saw him disintegrate with my own eyes, there is no mistaking it]

Subaru confirmed Ferris’ words, his mind playing back the final moments of the abominable Betelgeuse.

Screaming Subaru's name, full of hatred... Even long afterward, the sound would not leave his ears. Like a curse, it kept on howling...

—Was that the reason behind Subaru's cruel fate?

[Ferris: There are now 5 remaining Sin Archbishops. Two of them were responsible for the ambush on Crusch-sama. Their movements are always mysterious, and so even after 400 years the efforts to eradicate them barely made any progress. As to their objective... It is said that they want to revive the Witch of Envy]

[Subaru: Revive... the Witch?]

Unable to disregard these words, Subaru jumped up, tipping over his chair.

Noticing this gave the girls a fright, Subaru waved his hands up and down.

[Subaru: To revive her... is that even possible? The Witch has been dead for 400 years right? To make something like that come back to life...]

[Wilhelm: Subaru-dono, the Witch of Envy is not dead. Her life is still linked to the edge of this world. Unfortunately]

To the agitated Subaru, Wilhelm quietly revealed this fact.

Speechless, Subaru looked to Wilhelm, and met his eyes, serious and severe.

[Wilhelm: Near the Great Fall, there is a Sealing-Stone Temple. The Witch is there, her indestructible existence sealed inside. For even with the power of the Dragon and the Sword Saint combined, she cannot be destroyed]

[Subaru: Sealed... I might have heard that before... but to revive her, why don't they just destroy the seal?]

Where did Subaru hear that before? But more importantly is the question...

...If the witch was sealed, they merely need to break the seal, but instead, every time a half-elf appears they wreck havoc in the world with senseless murder and destruction. Just what is the Witch Cult trying to do? But at this question, Wilhelm shook his head.

[Wilhelm: To approach the temple is almost impossible. First, there is very little mana near the Great Fall, under those circumstances, no one can withstand the Witch's scent. Secondly, they cannot bypass the Elder Sages]

[Subaru: Elder Sages...?]

[Ferris: The Elder Sage Shaula, and the First Generation Sword Saint, and the Dragon Borukanica, were the heroes who sealed the Witch of Envy nyan. Then they retired to the Pleiades Watchtower near the Great Fall. But retired in name only, even now, they keep their watch, for those who would revive the Witch. — That is, as the story goes]

[Subaru: They must be... quite old...]

Four hundred years is quite a long breath, even for Sages.

But that is besides the point. Subaru decided to set that aside so Ferris could continue.

[Subaru: Well now we know why the Witch can't be unsealed, but then how do they revive her?]

[Ferris: Even if you ask nyan, Ferris isn't a Witch Cultist and doesn't know either. All we can do is torture a Witch Cultist and have them spit it out nyan]

Brushing off Subaru's question, Ferris took on an "I give up" expression.

Even though Subaru wasn't satisfied, there was no point pursuing the question further.

In any case, Emilia nodded.

[Emilia: So that's... why I'm treated like this... But why didn't Puck...]

[Subaru: Did Puck say something just now? There is a mountain of things I need to ask him!]

[Emilia: Puck didn't respond... Even though he seems to have materialized... I only know he's near by...]

Seeing Emilia shriveling in her seat, it did not even occur to Subaru to say

“there, there”. In fact, to talk to Puck is something he absolutely must do.

Besides, there is no way to predict where or when Sin Archbishop “Greed” will appear. Puck’s input will also be crucial.

[Ferris: That’s all there is to say about the Witch Cult nyan. So on top of that, let’s move the discussion to the future]

[Subaru: The future...?]

Turning to Subaru with a clap, Ferris, with a jubilant smile, said

[Ferris: To put it simply, this Alliance... let’s dissolve it nyan]

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The atmosphere in the lounge froze. Only Subaru’s mind was heating up.

Taking in those words, he pondered a moment, quietly licking his lips.

[Subaru: Dissolve the Alliance? What are you trying to say?]

[Ferris: Exactly what it sounds like nyan. As things are right now, our Alliance will not be mutually beneficial nyan]

Perhaps because Subaru kept his composure, Ferris' expression revealed a touch of admiration.

Rather annoyed by Ferris' expression, Subaru wondered if Ferris was setting up the Alliance as a bargaining chip to gain an advantage in the negotiation. The more he thought, the more he commanded himself to keep calm. But even so, his head was nearly boiling.

[Subaru: Mining rights aside, we coordinated our efforts to defeat the White Whale, and after everything is done, now you want to back out after reaping the benefits? That's a bit scandalous no matter how you look at it]

[Ferris: More detriment than benefits, Subaru-kyun]

[Subaru: Ah?]

Compared to Subaru's aggressive attitude, Ferris went on casually, wagging a finger.

[Ferris: Nyan? "Gluttony" and "Greed" appearing together, for starters. After killing "Sloth", an Alliance with Emilia-sama's camp will only make us targeted by the Witch Cult... Considering what happened to Crusch-sama... do you still believe it's in our interest to form an Alliance right now?]

[Subaru: That is...]

Glancing toward the completely different Crusch, Subaru hesitated to counter

Ferris' argument. Because deep in his heart, he was carrying the same wounds.

This time, it wasn't Subaru who refuted Ferris' words.

[Wilhelm: I disagree, Ferris]

Leaning forward in his seat, Wilhelm's stern gaze stared into Ferris' eyes. Ferris, eyelids narrowed, let out an [Eh-?] with a thin smile.

[Ferris: What do you mean nyan? After what Gluttony did to Crusch-sama, what do you think is the benefit of an Alliance that will draw the Witch Cult to us?]

[Wilhelm: To kill "Gluttony"... An opportunity to avenge our master]

[Ferris: Vengeance? Is that more important to you than Crusch-sama's life!?!]

Against Wilhelm, Ferris refused to give ground.

Weighing heavily on both their minds, were thoughts of their master.

[Ferris: If we continue to deal with the Witch Cult this disaster will only repeat again! Crusch-sama right now can't even protect herself! When that day comes... If it's physical wound or emotional wound, Ferris can heal you... But if you die it's all over isn't it!?!]

[Wilhelm: But we cannot remain idle while the offender roams free. Crusch-

sama's memories, when we defeat the Sin Archbishop, there is a chance they will return. To give up this early, is far too rash]

[Ferris: Defeating that bastard will bring the memories back? I say, Wilhelm, to think lost memories can be brought back by killing the thing that ate it... are you daydreaming or do you think this is some kind of fairy tale w—]

[Wilhelm: —Felix!!]

With an ear-splitting roar, the swordsman's aura resounded in the room. As if a gust of wind had swept in – was the sensation felt by everyone present.

All wincing from the shock, only Wilhelm's keen gaze remained intact.

[Wilhelm: Felix... What you said just now. Never utter it again in front of Subaru-dono]

[Ferris: I'm sorry]

...Called by his true name, twice, Ferris closed his eyes with grief and remorse.

The others turned their eyes to Subaru, who was already sitting once more. His hands clenched tightly, faintly trembling, blood seeped through the gaps between his fingers, as if about to cover them whole.

[Subaru: Emilia-tan]

[Emilia: Don't worry..... I won't say anything like "I understand" or "it's alright"... Even though I want to understand how you feel... that forgotten child... because I don't understand anything, no matter what I say, it won't be fair to you...]

Subaru looked up, into Emilia's violet pupils that flickered with sadness.

In her eyes he saw a reflection of himself, in all his weakness... is that the Natsuki Subaru she sees?

...As if saved by that tender regard, Subaru shook his head.

[Subaru: To say something like "it's alright"... even if I rip my mouth apart right now I won't be able say it. But I am fine. Ferris, don't worry about it. I... will not give up, as long as there is the tiniest fragment of hope left]

[Ferris: Really nyan... Subaru-kyun sure doesn't like to give up...]

Watching Subaru trying to act like he was fine, Ferris' countenance broke down into a smile. But his position remained unchanged.

[Ferris: As for Ferris nyan, I don't agree that we should continue the Alliance. I will return Crusch-sama to herself, just watch. So something like vengeance against "Gluttony" we should just set that aside for nyan]

[Wilhelm: What we should do, and how... Crusch-sama, you must decide. It is not in our position to do it]

In the end, it all falls on her.

Both their eyes focused upon her, and Crusch, as if understanding, nodded.

[Crusch: There is still plenty that I do not know. And what I was before, I cannot remember. I want to tell you now, that it will be disorienting, being around me... But even so, I thank you for placing in me your esteem, and trust. And if I could, I want to live up to that expectation. For that, I shall try my best]

Despite losing her memory, it seemed her strength of character remained.

Just what is the core essence of a person? Seeing Crusch like this once more, even after forgetting everything she knew, Subaru could not help but ask himself that question.

But as to the Alliance, there is no better choice than to put the negotiations on hold for now.

[Ferris: In any case, if the one who holds all the key information concerning Emilia-sama's faction... Margrave Roswaal isn't present, then there is nothing we can do nyan. So for our next negotiation, let's hold it on the condition that the Margrave be in attendance]

[Crusch: Yes, that is for the best. Then this meeting...]

[Ferris: Will be a secret — So pretend it was about something other than an Alliance nyan]

Ferris shot a sharp glance at Subaru, saying this in an unusually low voice.

Subaru swallowed, but seeing no reason to disagree, he nodded. From their perspective, this decision made sense. If Crusch's current condition is known to the public, her status as the most competent candidate will vanish.

In fact, the repercussions of Crusch's amnesia becoming public knowledge is of the same magnitude as the prestige of slaying the White Whale. It is for precisely this reason that Anastasia wasn't invited to this meeting.

[Ferris: Regardless of Julius, Anastasia will certainly use this information to her advantage. Good thing Crusch-sama's condition hasn't been seen by those kids of hers]

[Crusch: She will be present at the victor's negotiations, what do we do about that?]

[Ferris: We can make an excuse and say you're unwell. Ferris will think of something. As for Subaru-kyun, your side just need to keep this secret, understood?]

Requesting only silence, Ferris would not allow any further entanglement between their two factions. Subaru, noticing this, only nodded.

In the end, the meeting concluded without any progress whatsoever.

Acknowledging the desperation of their situations, more than anything else, the two factions are aligned in the uncertainty of their futures.

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[Subaru: Thank you for back there, Wilhelm-san]

After the meeting in the lounge, Subaru called out to Wilhelm outside the Karsten Mansion. Stopping in his steps, Wilhelm turned to Subaru.

[Wilhelm: Not at all. I was of no help, I'm ashamed of how deficient I am. Above all, I was unable to assist you today]

[Subaru: Don't say that, without Wilhelm-san, we wouldn't have defeated the White Whale. And afterward I was able to entrust Emilia and the villagers to you. I am really really grateful!]

These were unpackaged, genuine words of gratitude. But, even this could not lift the gloom from Wilhelm's face.

Never forgetting a past kindness, always carrying the pain of others within himself. This man... isn't he too good-natured for his own good? Subaru smiled at the thought.

[Subaru: Even though the situation hasn't settled yet, have you had a chance to visit your wife's grave? Even though it's no consolation, but at least you avenged...]

[Wilhelm: —!]

At Subaru's words, Wilhelm's face suddenly collapsed with deep emotion.

Seeing those intertwined waves of grief and sentiment, Subaru didn't know what to do. Noticing Subaru's hesitation, Wilhelm bowed deeply.

[Wilhelm: Subaru-dono, I must apologize!]

[Subaru: Wait, don't be like this, you have nothing to be sorry about, I should be thanking you right now...]

[Wilhelm: No, that is not true. The words I spoke in the meeting were not out of genuine desire to be your ally. It was my vain, selfish sentiment that made me support the Alliance. For concealing my guilt, I am deeply ashamed]

Not understanding Wilhelm's words, Subaru furrowed his brows.

Seeing this, Wilhelm took off his overcoat, and rolled up his left sleeve – revealing a bandaged wound around his left shoulder. Through the outer cloth one could see that the inner layers are wet with blood.

[Subaru: Does it hurt? You should get Ferris to look at that]

[Wilhelm: This wound cannot be healed. It was dealt by an opponent who possessed the Divine Protection of "Death God"]

[Subaru: Can't be healed? ...Then, Wilhelm-san!]

What an unhealable wound leads to, even Subaru knows this.

Normally, if bleeding can't be stopped, it's like a timer being set on one's life. But unlike Subaru, who looked full of apprehension, Wilhelm shook his head calmly.

[Wilhelm: My life is not in danger right now]

[Subaru: How can that be? That wound... what kind of attack...]

[Wilhelm: I did not receive this wound today or yesterday. It was from a long time ago, and it recently re-opened. But, for me right now, the wound is too large]

Listening to Wilhelm's quiet words, Subaru's small body quivered and contracted. Not knowing why he is having this reaction, even the roots of his teeth felt like they didn't fit in his jaw. All this came from the "Sword Demon" in front of him, an incredible aura that could freeze one's liver solid.

Continuing in his calm, gentle voice

[Wilhelm: The effects of a Divine Protection becomes stronger, when the owner of the Divine Protection is near. When "Death God"'s owner approaches, the wounds they inflicted will open]

[Subaru: Then that means... the person who inflicted your wound long ago... is near...]

[Wilhelm: The one who wounded my left shoulder... Is the Previous-Generation Sword Saint]

Listening to Wilhelm, Subaru's breathing stopped.

Gazing into Wilhelm's eyes, he saw the frozen glitters of emotion.

[Wilhelm: Thearesia van Astrea. The wound dealt by my wife has re-opened. In order to find out why, I must continue to pursue the Witch Cult...]

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Lost in a daze, Subaru stepped into the room where Rem was sleeping.

Ever since returning to Crusch's mansion, whenever there is a chance, he would come to stay with her.

Even though he knew it would not happen, somewhere in his heart, in his weakness, he hoped she could just wake up.

In this state, he no longer had the courage or the will to face Emilia. Being Emilia, perhaps she would understand after all. If she was by his side now, it will only bring her pain. Unless Subaru looked for her, she would give him time to himself, even though she couldn't stop worrying.

If Emilia was here, he'd probably cry, if only to comfort that weakness within his heart.

Though he hated that weakness, he could not cut it from himself.

[Rem... Even though you told me I'm strong, I... without you with me, I can't find it Rem... I can't...]

Nothing changed from when he left for the lounge.

Softly breathing. Her heart was beating. But other than this, there was not a single sign of life. Right now, only Subaru's heart still carries her existence.

But,

[Subaru: — It's you... which wind blew you here?]

[Puck: Me being here, is that so strange? Even I had some kind of relationship with this girl before, right? Then occasionally coming here, what's wrong with that?]

[Subaru: Where do you get the nerve...]

Gently touching Rem's sleeping forehead, Subaru glanced to his side — Floating in the air, was a small grey cat wagging his long tail, looking at him.

At the meeting he was nowhere to be found, yet he showed up here. Noticing

Subaru's severe glance, Puck seemed taken aback.

[Puck: Why're you looking at me like that? Did I do something?]

[Subaru: ...Right now, you didn't do anything... Go find Emilia, as long as you go float around somewhere else]

[Puck: Is that so? That's a curious thing to say. Even though my freedom isn't restricted, if that child gets in trouble while I'm not there...]

Flicking his whisker, Puck murmured leisurely. Then, floating up to Subaru's face,

[Puck: But I think its better that I talk to Subaru right now]

[Subaru: ...Acting like you know everything, it's really pissing me off]

Subaru turned his gaze away. Even so, Puck silently waited for him.

Subaru sighed, even though meekly following along annoyed him.

[Subaru: You didn't tell Emilia about the Witch Cult... What are your intentions?]

[Puck: No intention at all, if some things you can live without knowing, then not knowing is fine too. If Lia asked me, I would have told her, but she didn't ask... People like that, if you just avoid them then it doesn't matter, right?]

[Subaru: Yes, there are times when it's fine to not know some things. But this is totally not the case for Emilia is it?? That girl came out of the forest, to become King, she is fighting to win the Royal Selection! There is no way to avoid the Witch Cult like that. —You know this, of course you know this]

Pressing low his voice, Subaru pursued Puck's intentions. But Puck, wobbling in the air, easily dodged Subaru's vigorous questions.

[Puck: The Witch Cult appearing... I suspected it too. But whether I would convey that to Lia is a completely different matter]

[Subaru: Even if it meant endangering her, and everyone else around her!? I don't know what you're thinking, but if things went the way they were Emilia would have —!!]

[Puck: I see... You did all this to save Lia. This child too... she sacrificed herself to help her. In that case I really need to thank this child...]

[Subaru: —-!]

In that instant, disregarding all the world, Subaru threw his punch.

At the Spirit in front of his eyes, without a trace of hesitation, he swung with all his might. The Spirit, easily avoiding his strike, washed its face with astonishment.

[Puck: What are you doing, all of a sudden?]

[Subaru: Don't you dare touch Rem. Not with your hands, or your words...]

Surprised himself, his voice broke quietly.

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The emotions brewing in his heart, perhaps they became too impossible to bear.

With his round eyes, Puck gazed deep into Subaru, and with an [I understand], he stretched his little body.

[Puck: I said something inconsiderate, sorry, I shouldn't have said it. Instead of this... Let's talk a bit about "Gluttony"]

[Subaru: ...talk? What will that do now?]

[Puck: If you learn the nature of the thing that ate this girl's "Name" and "Memory", perhaps there is hope of fulfilling your wish, after all]

Jumping at those words, Subaru's face flung up. Seeing this reaction, Puck nodded, then he turned up his small pink nose as if searching for a memory.

[Puck: "Gluttony"'s Authority, to put it simply, is eating. When he eats a person's "Name", all memories about this person is taken, and when he eats a person's "Memory", that person's own memories are taken. If both are taken, then the person becomes an empty shell. An empty shell won't do anything, and

could not do anything. This girl's condition, is just that]

[Subaru: "Name" ... "Memory" ...]

Crusch's memory. Rem's memory and name.

Such is the effect of Gluttony's Authority.

[Subaru: After killing the Sin Archbishop "Gluttony" ... will the memories return...?]

[Puck: Ah, what would happen? Throw up everything that's been eaten... even though I don't like to think about it, is that something that can be done? You'll need to ask the man himself...]

[Subaru: But the possibility exists, doesn't it!? Rem's memories, the possibility of retrieving Rem's memories...!]

Turning back... Rem is still deep in her slumber.

Still softly breathing. Her heart was beating. Her body is still alive, only her memory, and her name, were eaten by a fiend.

[Subaru: Sin Archbishop Gluttony —I will absolutely annihilate you]

[Puck: Even though I still think it's not that simple...]

Puck's last few words didn't enter Subaru's mind.

Subaru, right now, is defending that final fragment of hope like the very last bastion in his heart.

—

—When he arrived in the Capital, he found Rem after the attack, and when he knew all was lost, without a shred of hesitation, Subaru stabbed a dagger into his own throat.

What he felt at that moment, he could no longer remember. Everything had turned out so perfectly, so perfect beyond everyone's expectations — But the truth is, throwing it all away in that instant, none of it mattered to him.

If he lost Rem, if it meant walking into a future without her, no matter how many times he must endure that pain, he will — — Only this, Subaru clearly remembers.

Penetrating his throat, in blood, pain, searing heat, and loss, he lost all consciousness.

When he woke, what he saw was Rem lying in a bed.

The save point had moved forward. The place of return had changed. Subaru saw hell, and only hell.

Again! It must be some mistake, he must kill himself again... But Subaru

hesitated. He was not afraid of pain or death. But he realized...

...Even if he returned to the previous save point, he could not save her.

At the save point before the battle with Betelgeuse, after the the battle with the White Whale, Subaru and Rem had already went in separate directions for several hours. It is too late to catch them before the ambush. But even if he could, Emilia will be abandoned. And even if he sent the expedition to Emilia with the plan and rushed to the ambush, how will he defeat two Sin Archbishops?

To defeat Betelgeuse, Subaru's presence is indispensable, and Emilia's escape cannot be managed without Wilhelm's protection.

To sacrifice Emilia to save Rem, or to sacrifice Rem to save Emilia —Without sacrificing one or the other he couldn't save anyone at all.

Faced with this impossible choice, Subaru lowered the dagger from his throat.

Unlike being erased by the White Whale's mist, though forgotten by all the world, Rem's body remains here. Beside her, unable to do anything, he merely sat there in a daze...

—

But that time spent in cruel futility ends here. It ends now.

Holding Rem's sleeping hand, Subaru confirmed his resolve. Of one thing he is certain,

—I will

[Subaru: Retrieve... Rem, I promise... I will retrieve your memories]

It was a promise. That right in front of your eyes, the man you fell in love with, will become the greatest hero the world has ever seen.

We are still half way on that path, aren't we?

[Subaru: I promise... Your hero will come for you. Wait just a little longer]

Lifting his face, teeth bared. It was a declaration of war.

The fiends shall regret the day they laid hands on what is sacred and inviolable.

For I, Natsuki Subaru, shall bring punishment upon you.

[Subaru: I will —I promise I will!]

In the days starting from Zero, I can no longer endure a single one without the thought of you by my side.

So I must retrieve...

The days that are lost, the days I have walked with you, and all the days I will

walk with you again... With my own hands, I swear I will take it back once more!

Credits

Translation: [TranslationChicken](#)

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